

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 FAA-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 780

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

UNCLAS TUNIS 2837

ROME FOR CIVAIR ATTACHE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, BEXP, TS

SUBJECT: TUNIS AIR: ACQUISITION PLANS AND DEVELOPMENTS

1. TUNIS AIR'S PLANS FOR AIRCRAFT ACQUISITION DISCUSSED BY EXIMBANK OFFICERS T. MORAN AND B. ABDESELEM AND E/C OFFICER GALLAGHER IN APRIL 10 CALL ON TUNIS AIR FINANCIAL DIRECTOR YOUSSEF AMMAR AND HIS ASSOCIATE MOKHTAR BOUAZIZ. TUNIS AIR OFFICIALS MADE CLEAR AIRLINE HAS SUSPENDED PLANS FOR WIDEBODY PURCHASE GIVEN MODEST GROWTH IN TRAFFIC IN 1976 AND DISAPPOINTING TWO PERCENT GROWTH IN 1977. HOWEVER, AMMAR SAID TUNIS AID IS IN MARKET FOR BOEING 737 OR OTHER PLANE OF COMPARABLE CHARACTERISTICS TO BE USED FOR CARGO AND PASSENGERS.

2. TUNIS AIR OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT IF AND WHEN WIDEBODY PRUCHASE IS CONSIDERED, AIRBUS NOT LIKELY CANDIDATE BECAUSE OF TOO SHORT RANGE FOR ANNUAL QUOTE HAD UNQUOTE FILIGHTS TO SAUDI ARABIA. (NOTE: WHILE EMBASSY UNDER IMPRESSION THAT MODIFIED AIRBUS MAY HAVE NECESSARY RANGE, WE OBVIOUSLY DID NOT DISPUTE THIS POINT).

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3. TUNIS AIR OFFICIALS REFERRED TO PROMISING NEW DIRECT SERVICE INAUGURATED APRIL 3 TO MADRID AND SPOKE OF POSSIBLE INAUGURATION OF DIRECT SERVICE TO ATHENS WITH FLIGHTS CONTINUING TO KUWAIT. (ATTER WOULD EFFECT SAVINGS AB FLIGHT PRESENTLY STOPS IN CAIRO AND EGYPTIAN AIRPORT FEES ADD SIGNIFICANT COST TO THIS FLIGHT).

4. FOR ROME: WITH TUNISIA NO LONGER COVERED BY REGIONAL CIVIL AIR ATTACHE FORMERLY RESIDENT IN CASABLANCA, BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF CIVAIR ATTACHE DWOR FOUND OCCASION TO MAKE CALLS IN TUNIS. VISIT IN REASONABLY NEAR FUTURE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE GIVEN RECENT CHANE IN TOP MANAGEMENT OF TUNIS AIR, WITH FORMER TOURISM DIRECTOR SADOKLBOUAOUI REPLACING ABDELAZIZ ZENAIDI AS TUNIS AIR QUOTE PRESIDENT, DIRECTOR GENERAL UNQUOTE (CHAIRMAN). MIGHT SUBSEQUENTLY BE WORTH EXPLORING WITH DEPARTMENT FORMAL INCLUSION OF TUNISIA IN MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL COVERAGE FROM ROME.
MULCAHY

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